

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

July 11, 2022

The Honorable Michael S. Regan  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20460-0001

Dear Administrator Regan:

We write to ask the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to move swiftly to finalize the revised stronger standards for annual and 24-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for fine particulate matter pollution (PM<sub>2.5</sub>). We appreciate the Agency's commitment to science in this reconsideration of the 2020 standards and urge the finalization of standards consistent with the recommendations of the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee (CASAC).

Under the Clean Air Act, EPA is required to review the NAAQS using the best available science and determine the standards that best protect public health with an adequate margin of safety. The 2020 review of the PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS was rushed and ignored the science that showed the current standards (which were ultimately maintained) to be inadequate to protect public health. We welcome this reconsideration and are pleased with the thoroughness shown already by the review panels.

In February, the CASAC recommended that the Agency strengthen the annual standard to a range of 8-10 micrograms per cubic meter (µg/m<sup>3</sup>) and the 24-hour standard to a range of 25-30 µg/m<sup>3</sup>.<sup>1</sup> While there is no safe level of particle pollution, strengthening the PM NAAQS will lead to health benefits for millions across the country that are currently breathing in unhealthy air despite living in an area that is in attainment of the current inadequate standards. Particle pollution can trigger asthma attacks, lead to cardiovascular and lung complications and is estimated to be responsible for over 40,000 premature deaths annually.<sup>2</sup>

According to the American Lung Association's 2022 "State of the Air" report, 9 million more people were impacted by deadly particle pollution from the years 2018-2020 than in the previous annual report.<sup>3</sup> The increase in frequency and intensity of wildfires is largely responsible for this jump. Wildfire smoke can linger in the air both near and far from the blaze, degrading air quality and threatening health. The CASAC included among their recommendations that EPA consider potential pathways to better incorporate "exceptional events," like wildfires, into regulatory

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. EPA. CASAC Review of the EPA's Policy Assessment for the Reconsideration of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter (External Review Draft-October 2021), March 2022. EPA-CASAC-22-002.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. EPA. Policy Assessment for the Reconsideration of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter, May 2022. EPA-452/R-22-004

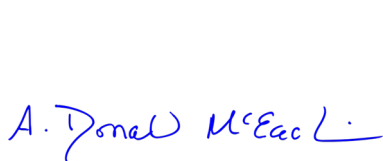
<sup>3</sup> American Lung Association. State of the Air. Apr 2022. [www.lung.org/sota](http://www.lung.org/sota)

standards.<sup>4</sup> We support the recommendation that EPA rethink about how best to capture exceptional events so that public health is prioritized.

Strengthening particle pollution standards is a health equity imperative. People of color are 61% more likely than white people to live in an area with unhealthy air quality.<sup>5</sup> For decades, environmental justice communities – low-income communities, communities of color and Tribal and indigenous communities – have suffered disproportionately from the cumulative exposure to multiple pollutants. In this reconsideration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> NAAQS, EPA has an opportunity to address these inequities, which will provide immediate health benefits to these overburdened communities while also improving air quality broadly.

As Members of Congress, we represent the voices of individuals and their concerns about the air that they are breathing. We urge you to follow sound science and swiftly finalize stronger standards for both annual and short-term particle pollution.

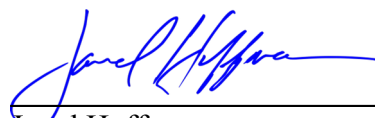
Sincerely,



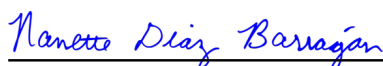
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<sup>4</sup> U.S. EPA. CASAC Review of the EPA's Policy Assessment for the Reconsideration of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Particulate Matter (External Review Draft-October 2021), March 2022. EPA-CASAC-22-002.

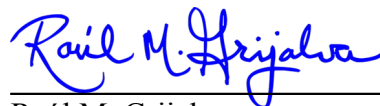
<sup>5</sup> American Lung Association. State of the Air. Apr 2022. [www.lung.org/sota](http://www.lung.org/sota)



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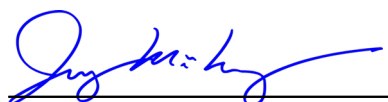
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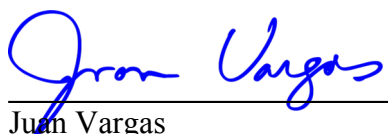
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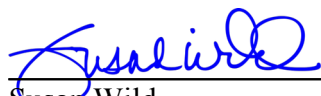
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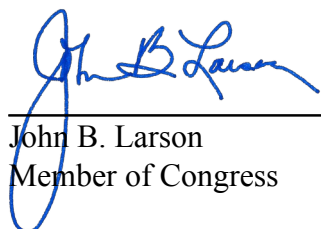
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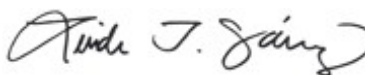
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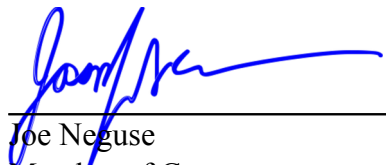
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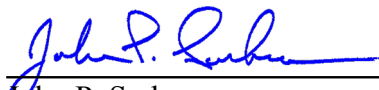
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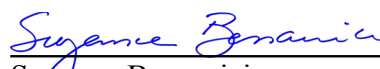
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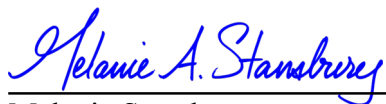
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